

1 Rackwick Glen & Old Man of Hoy
14¼ miles/23.6km there & back

2 Around Ward Hill, Dwarfie Stane & Tree Reserve at Burn of Quoys
10 miles/16.09km circular route

3 Ward Hill Summit from The Dwarfie Stane Car Park
3 miles/4.8km there & back

4 Scad Head & Betty Corrigan's Grave, North Hoy Circular
2½ miles/4km circular route

View over Scapa Flow from Lyrawa Viewpoint



1 Rackwick Glen & Old Man of Hoy

The passenger ferry from Stromness lands at Moaness pier. (NB: Mini-buses and taxis are available to take you to/from Rackwick for the Rackwick Glen and Old Man of Hoy Walks). Follow the road from Moaness pier uphill, ignoring all side turnings, until the road bends right below steep-faced Ward Hill and Cullags. Keep straight ahead on a hard track with a footpath sign for Rackwick. Cross the burn draining Sandy Loch by stepping across stone gabions downstream of the dam. Continue along the sunken, sandy path beside the loch, when a small cairn is soon reached, marking a shallow col. Beyond the cairn the rough path runs downhill, mainly on one side or the other of the indented old track. Berriedale is the deeply-incised stream valley across the glen. Its lower stretches contain a remnant of the native scrub woodland that once covered much of Orkney. Beyond a bridge over Rackwick Burn, join a tarmac road and turn right for Rackwick, an old crofting settlement on a dramatically beautiful bay. At a fork, branch left for the car park and toilets behind the beach or right for the Youth Hostel and Old Man of Hoy path.

Onward to the Old Man of Hoy

If on foot, walk past the Youth Hostel and follow a path signposted for the Old Man of Hoy. The first building on the left contains a folk history display. The path then weaves uphill between croft houses and forks right below a turf-roofed building – the Craa's Nest Museum. If arriving by car, start from the car park near the beach and follow the hard track that is a continuation of the road then bend right up a green lane to meet the Old Man of Hoy path just below the Craa's Nest Museum. The path passes a final cottage then goes through a kissing gate on to the open heather-covered hillside. It steadily climbs above the cliffs on the west side of Rackwick Bay. At the crest there is suddenly a view to the Old Man of Hoy. The path crosses stony ground, keeping its height above the lower ground to the left. Then veers towards the sea stack. Take great care by the cliffs, especially on the natural promontory that juts out towards the Old Man – a great place for photographs if you have a head for heights. Return by the same route.

2 Around Ward Hill, The Dwarfie Stane & Tree Reserve at Burn of Quoys

The passenger ferry from Stromness lands at Moaness pier. (NB: Mini-buses and taxis are available to take you to/from Rackwick). Follow the road from Moaness pier uphill, ignoring all side turnings, until the road bends right below steep-faced Ward Hill and Cullags. Keep straight ahead on a hard track with a footpath sign for Rackwick. Cross the burn draining Sandy Loch at the stone gabions downstream of the dam. Continue along the sandy path beside the loch, when a small cairn is soon reached, marking a shallow col. Beyond the cairn the rough path runs downhill, mainly on one side or the other of the Indented old track. Berriedale is the deeply-incised stream valley across the glen. Its lower stretches contain a remnant of the native scrub woodland that once covered much of Orkney. Beyond a bridge over Rackwick Burn, where the path joins a tarmac road, turn left to head back towards Moaness. Rich roadside vegetation and evidence of extensive peat cutting are to be seen, as well as the deep corrie of Nowt Bield cut into the side of Ward Hill (on your left). On the opposite side of the road from this glen you will see another, called Trowie Glen and, to the east of it, the other (largely forgotten) stone of Hoy: the Partick Stane. A little further along the road you will see the signs and car park for more famous Dwarfie Stane. There is a footpath/boardwalk leading all the way to this rock-cut chambered tomb where you will find an interpretation board providing more information on the stone. After this brief diversion continue on along the road (in a northerly direction) passing the White Glen tree plantation at Whaness. This was once an experimental Forestry Commission plantation of conifer trees but suffered quite badly from a moorland fire in 1984. It is now in the hands of the RSPB who are replanting the area with native deciduous trees taken from stock grown naturally in the Berriedale area. To see how these trees you will need to walk just a little further to the Hoy Trust Burn of Quoys site. Continue on up the Rackwick Road until you meet the crossroad. Turn sharp left up the B9047 towards the Outdoor Centre. A couple of hundred metres up this road you will see a disused quarry to your left and on your right a kissing-gate: go through it into the reserve. Here you will be able to see almost all of Orkney's native tree species: Downy Birch, Rowan, Hazel and various Willows and Roses (only the Aspen tree is missing). Keep the burn on your left as you travel down the reserve. On the other (east) side of the reserve exit via the kissing gate or stile. Turn left (on the B9049), shortly you will see a sign for the Post Office. You can either follow this road down to the beach and along the shore to Moaness Pier or, if you prefer continue north along the main road to the T-junction where you should turn to your right to get back to the pier.



4 Scad Head & Betty Corrigan's Grave, North Hoy Circular

This is a pleasant, way marked path through the heather to the WW11 Scad Head Coast Battery overlooking the Bring Deeps in Scapa Flow. From Moaness pier head south for 3.5 miles, or from Lyness head north for 6.5 miles, to the signposted viewpoint at Lyrawa. It is a rough track but you can take a car up to the viewpoint for panoramic views of Scapa Flow. From here, to the North, follow the way marked path that drops below the remains of a gun emplacement, down to the Observation Post at Scad Head, which you can see in the distance. After a while the path joins the old railway track and here you turn right and follow it all the way to the coast. There was no access by road to this battery so a 900 yard, 2 feet gauge incline railway was built from the main road down to a group of sidings near the battery observation post. This operated like a tramway, and the winding gear and wheels can still be seen near the road. Steel wagons ran on the railway, and their remains can be seen at the base of the cliff at Scad Head. As you drop down to the bay of Chalmers Hope you will see the remains of the camp overlooking the bay. In November, Grey seals, with their fluffy white pups breed here. Round the bay to your left is the site of the original 12-pounder gun emplacement, and if you go down to the shore you will come across the remains of the railway wagon as you make your way along to the Observation Tower. Here you have the remains of gun emplacements, searchlights and engine room, all placed to cover the boom defences, the remains of which can be seen on the shore to the east of the searchlight emplacements. In 1939 an anti-submarine and anti-surface ship defence boom was installed between Houton Head and Scad Head across the Bring Deeps, to defend the western entrance to Scapa Flow. The boom consisted of a system of robust floats and a heavy chain across the surface, from which antisubmarine netting was suspended. (You can see a sample of this at the entrance to Scapa Flow Visitor Centre). Once you have explored Scad Head you return up the railway track to the main road and turn left. On your right is the small lochan, the Water of Hoy. Look out for Red Throated divers as they usually make their nests here each summer. Rather than turn up the track to your starting point, carry on along the road and pay a visit to Betty Corrigan's lonely grave over in the heather to your right, just beyond the end of the lochan.

The Old Man of Hoy

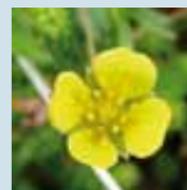


3 Ward Hill from the Dwarfie Stane Car Park

From the car park at the Dwarfie Stane go through the gate a little to the west of the car park and head straight up the shoulder towards the Howes of Quooyawa. As you get nearer you will see that you can skim round the left of here and head across the middle towards the trig point at the top of Ward Hill. From here, on a clear day, the whole of Orkney stretches out before you and you can see right along the North coast of Scotland also. If it's a bonny day, you might wish to wander along the ridge towards Rackwick, or even drop down the Red Glen and follow the path back to Moaness if you are without transport. If you left your car at the car park then you will need to retrace your steps in that direction.



Flowers are abundant in Hoy



Bonxie



Dwarfie Stane

Rackwick Beach



5 Heldale Water, Tor Ness Lighthouse & Melsetter

11 miles/17.7km circular route

5 Heldale Water, Tor Ness Lighthouse & Melsetter

Start/Finish: Just east of the Heldale/B9047 junction
 Maps - OS Explorer 462; OS Landranger 7 (Map & compass skills could be required in poor weather).

From the bottom of the Heldale road, follow the good track northwest across the moor from the signposted access track to Heldale Water. The going is easy, and the gradient slight. Continue on the track west to the eastern end of Heldale Water. Head along the left side of the fence, outside the compound, and follow the rough track along the south side of the loch. You will find the steep ground below Skird Hill quite rough, with deep heather, but as you reach the western end of Heldale Water the path levels out and is much easier going. Now cut across the open moor to the southwest, heading for the rocky hills at Sweinn Geo, crossing a small stream just before you reach the cliff tops.

Alternative route - easier walking but longer: Follow the right hand shore of Heldale Loch and head for the summit of Bakingstone Hill (map ref: 253 928). From here head WNW down to the burn (approx map ref: 245 931), where you will find a delightful pool surrounded with low bushes, an idyllic picnic spot. Follow the burn all the way to the coast at Little Rackwick then follow the coastline southward.

The walking here is marvellous, and takes you into parts of the island little visited by other walkers. Continue upwards beyond the Needle, a huge spike of rock set in a narrow gulf at the base of the cliffs, then descend southwards towards the bay at Ha Wick. **Great care should be taken here as the descent is steep and huge geos cut inland.** As you approach Ha Wick the ground levels out, and the cliffs on your right become much lower. You get a view of the lighthouse on Tor Ness dead ahead, and a short walk around a lovely sandy bay will bring you up to its base. The headland itself is a wonderful spot, and just around it to the east big dunes have built up behind Sheep Skerry. Head eastwards across these dunes and you'll pick up a track. Follow this northeastwards, turning left at the first junction, to take you past Melsetter Farm on your left and on down past Melsetter House* until you reach the B9047. Turn left along the road and follow it around North Bay back to your car at Heldale.

*Note: It is possible to tour Melsetter House. However, this is only possible on Thursdays and by prior arrangement.

Ha Wick Beach



6 Lyness Museum, Naval Cemetery & Wee Fea Circular

3 miles/5km circular route

Maps - OS Explorer 462; OS Landranger 7

The vehicle ferry to Hoy sails from Houton on Mainland to Lyness. From Lyness pier, head up the road to the Scapa Flow Visitors Centre. Here you will be able to gain a glimpse of what life was like on Hoy during the second World War when Scapa Flow became a major centre for naval operations in these northern waters both as a blockade to the German Grand Fleet and in connection with the Arctic Convoys to Russia. Admission is free and there is a cafe and toilet facilities.

From the Centre, head north - following what is left of the railway track - in order to have a brief view of what remains of the naval complex here, including a trip into the air-raid shelter. Follow the road until it meets the island's main north-south road. A few steps along this road on the left you will find the Naval Cemetery which is the final resting place for nearly 600 dead from two World Wars. On the opposite side of the cemetery from the main entrance is another gate. Pass through this gate and along the access path which brings you to a T-junction, follow the hard track up to Wee Fea, the WW2 Naval Communication Centre and Signal Station.

Climb steeply beside a stunted pine plantation then turn left to the car park, from where there are excellent views over Scapa Flow and the South Isles of Fara, Flotta and Switha. Walk back above an old military building, up a track which bends left past old peat cuttings. Keep right at a fork and follow the track to its end. Cut across the heather moorland to a line of concrete fence posts and follow them downhill to a little shed, avoiding a cave-like entrance to a bunker. Turn left below it on to a green track that curves back around the hillside to the picnic site. Return down the track past the plantation, go straight along the crossroads and follow the road round towards the pier. Just before the Centre, on your left, you will see a memorial to the merchant seamen who lost their lives during WW2 whilst serving on the Arctic Convoys.



Naval Cemetery

Melsetter Dunes



7 Brims - Lifeboat Museum & Coastal Circular

Park at the lifeboat museum and then follow the coast as best you can. There is no readily identifiable path, just choose the best route round the coast. You will pass the remains of a possible Bronze Age settlement at the Geo of Rottenloch. Above Duncan's Geo there are the remains of a rectangular chambered cairn approx 9m by 5m, and further along the remains of a broch. As you drop down you cross a small bridge and then in front of you there is a field gate. From here you could take a short cut by going round to the right of the ground in front of you, keeping left go up the hill keeping the small lochan on your left. Make for the row of outbuildings at the top of the brae and exit the field by the gate at the right hand end. Turn left on the road and follow the road down to the sea, turning right to the Lifeboat Museum to return to your car. If you choose, continue to follow the coast, passing a natural arch and Old Head. When you reach the sandy bay at Melberry you need to turn inland and pick up the track that goes through the farm at Melsetter*. Follow the road down to the bay and at the T junction turn right along the road. Turn right at the start of the Ayre where it is signposted to the Lifeboat Museum and follow the road back to the car park.

8 South Walls Coastal

8 miles/12.8km return route

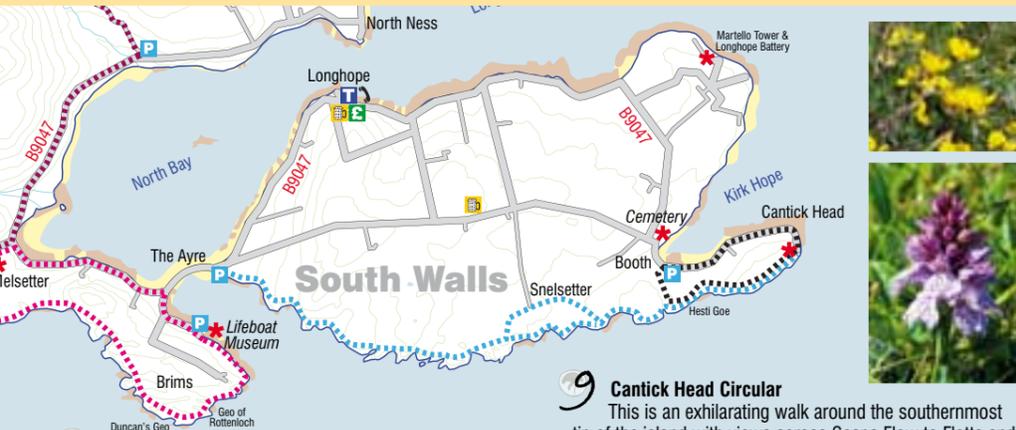
9 Cantick Head Circular

2 1/4 miles/3.6km circular route

Produced with the kind assistance of:
 Island of Hoy Development Trust
 Graemsay, Hoy & Walls Community Council
 Scottish Natural Heritage
 All of nature for all of Scotland

Walking Guide

Hoy & South Walls



8 South Walls Coastal, including The Hill of White Hamars Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserve

Park in the car park at the eastern end of the Ayre and follow the path along the coast to the east. After a while the path fizzles out but just follow the coast watching out for the styles to get you over the fences. As you get nearer to the steading of Snelsetter you will pick up the circular paths that go round the Reserve. You can follow these along the coast and then turn inland towards the cottage at Loft, turn left again and this will bring you through the farm steading, follow the track to the right through the steading then take the gate on your left and go back down to the coastal path.

You could follow the path right along the coast to the lighthouse and then return by the same route to your car. Or alternatively, if you follow the tarmac road from the lighthouse you could continue round to a small car park at the head of Kirk Hope bay, go into the car park and on your right, take the path which goes round the field and back down to the shore, turning right when you reach the sea.

9 Cantick Head Circular

This is an exhilarating walk around the southernmost tip of the island with views across Scapa Flow to Flotta and South Ronaldsay, and over the Pentland Firth to Caithness. Park just past the farm of Booth. Map ref: 335 894. Turn right out of the car park, along the coastal road, and over a cattle grid. On your left are the remains of a circular gatepost, which is said to have been at the entrance to the long gone castle at Snelsetter. Along the shoreline, are the remains of boat nousts, one of which is still in use. Carry on along the road and you cant help but notice the Outer Green Hill - a Late Neolithic chambered tomb, similar to that at Maeshowe. No human remains were found but quite a number of animal bones, including Orkney Vole. Radiocarbon dates the vole samples as medieval which is interesting, as voles are no longer found on the island. As you reach the lighthouse take the gate through the fence on your left. The lighthouse was designed by David & Thomas Stevenson and built between 1856 and 1858. Fully automated in 1991, it is now privately owned and run as self-catering accommodation. Follow the wall along to the far end then continue along the coast path. Watch out for nesting seabirds and cetaceans out at sea. As you start to drop down slightly, at map ref 3405 8905 you will notice a disturbed mound. This is the site of the Roeberry Barrow consisting of an oval cairn from either the Neolithic or Bronze ages which was subsequently remodelled and a square barrow built on top, possibly in Pictish times. This is the first square barrow found in Orkney and seems to have been used from the Neolithic (C5000), through to the Pictish period (C400-800AD). Dropping down from here you come to the remains of an Iron Age Broch, Hesti Geo, passing through what is left of a Bronze Age settlement. Continue round the coast till you come to a stile at West Geo, do not cross the stile but follow the wall inland, passing through a gate onto a fenced path leading you around the field to the car park.

9 Designated Walks featuring some of the most dramatic and spectacular locations in Orkney

To take the head of all their big talk
 Just pay attention to the wise HOY hawk**

The best way to enjoy Hoy & South Walls is to keep to the paths in this leaflet. They will take you to the most interesting places on the island and allow you to enjoy exploring while local folk get on with farming.

When you are out and about on the islands please remember:
 • keep dogs under close control at all times • avoid disturbing livestock or damaging crops • leave gates as you found them • do not pick wild plants or disturb wildlife • take your litter home with you • do not block gateways or access tracks

For your safety: • cliffs can be dangerous • be careful at all times near the cliffs and ensure children and dogs are closely supervised • avoid cliff walks in very windy or foggy conditions • be aware of the tides • bonxies and terns will protect their nests

Weather: Orkney weather can be unpredictable and can change very quickly • always be prepared, take warm and waterproof clothing

Paths not pavements: • the walks go over rough ground, so wear sturdy footwear

Getting to Hoy: • daily ferry service to Hoy from Stromness and Houton operated by Orkney Ferries - tel: (01856) 872044 • web: www.orkneyferries.co.uk

Further Info: • accommodation & travel information contact VisitOrkney, The Travel Centre, West Castle St, Kirkwall, KW15 1GU

tel: (01856) 872856 • web: www.visitorkney.com

**Island nicknames rhymes by the late George Scott courtesy of Mrs N. E. Bain (Scott). Maps based on OS Open Source mapping data 2011 © Colin Keldie - K4 Graphics.

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